

# Welcome to the National Trading Standards (NTS) Scam Marshal Newsletter: January 2022

Total Scam Marshals across the UK: 2,119



**NATIONAL  
TRADING  
STANDARDS**  
Scams Team

## Happy New Year



Another year has gone by and the Friends Against Scams Team have been working hard to help raise awareness of scams throughout the UK to help protect communities from these crimes.

Many awareness sessions (virtual) have been held and TV/Radio and newspaper appearances from people in the team and you, the Scam Marshals have helped to keep scams and fraud at the forefront of people's minds.

The team are looking to surpass the 1 million Friends target in 2022 and they need your help. Please promote the Friends Against Scams session whenever you speak to people about scams, it can help to prevent them from becoming a scam victim!

### Stats

- Scam mail received in to the NTS Scams Team: **1,227**
- New Scam Marshals in 2021: **373**
- People that have completed the Friends Against Scams awareness session: **869,746** (increase of **208,678** in 2021)

## Financial Conduct Authority launch Loan fee fraud campaign



2021 has been a tough year for many. However, there are criminals out there looking to make it even tougher. They target the most financially vulnerable people of society.

Loan fee fraud occurs when someone pays a fee upfront for a loan they never receive. It's an increasingly common scam with people losing £274 on average.

The good news is you can protect yourself with this three-step check:

- If you're asked to pay an upfront fee, it could be a scam.
- If you're asked to pay quickly, it could be a scam.
- If you're asked to pay in an unusual way, such as vouchers or money transfer, it could be a scam.

Always check that the provider is authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority before you borrow. Visit the FCA's Financial Services Register or call 0800 111 6768

To learn more about scams, visit [www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk](http://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk)

Due to the current restrictions, we are unable to send out our Scam Marshal mail bags. However please continue to send any scam mail to our freepost address: **NTSST Freepost, Mail Marshals**

## DVLA Reports High Number of Driving Licence Scams

In the past 12 months, the DVLA has reported that it has received over 800 reports of unofficial rip-off services offering driving licence renewal services to over-70s, which can in fact be done for free on the DVLA's official Gov.uk website.

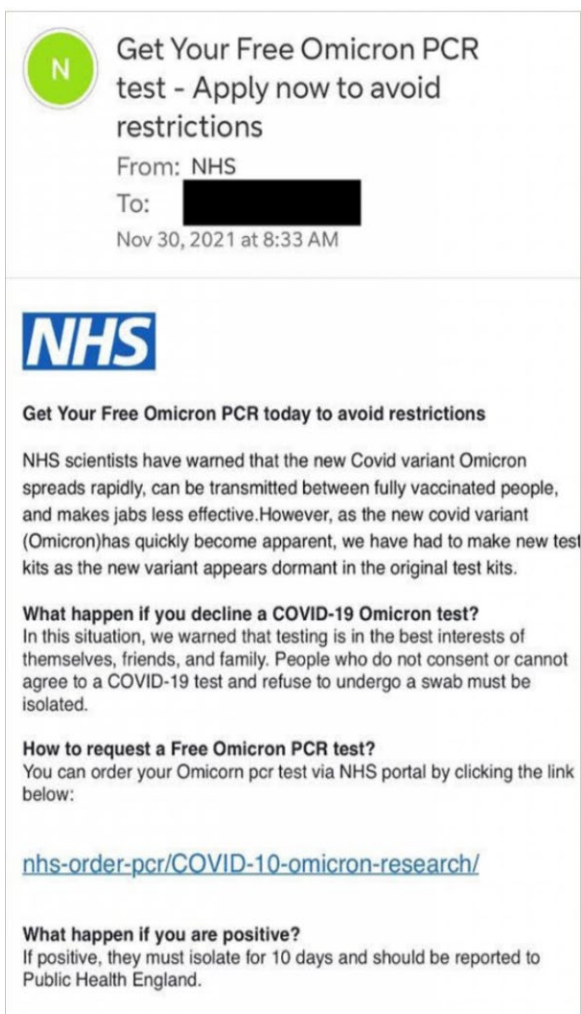
### How to avoid a DVLA scam

The DVLA says it never asks for a reply to emails or text messages. Even if the text or email appears to be from the DVLA, if you're asked for payment details or to log in to your account, it's a scam.

When applying for a DVLA service, check the website address and make sure you only use a 'Gov.uk' website.

Report suspicious emails by forwarding the email to [report@phishing.gov.uk](mailto:report@phishing.gov.uk) and report suspicious text messages by forwarding the message to 7726 (spells SPAM on the old-style keypads).

## Omicron Variant Scam



The screenshot shows a fake email from NHS. The header has a green circle with a white 'N' and the text 'Get Your Free Omicron PCR test - Apply now to avoid restrictions'. Below this, it says 'From: NHS', 'To: [redacted]', and 'Nov 30, 2021 at 8:33 AM'. The main body of the email features the NHS logo and the heading 'Get Your Free Omicron PCR today to avoid restrictions'. The text explains that NHS scientists have warned about the new Covid variant Omicron, which spreads rapidly and makes jabs less effective. It claims that new test kits have been developed for the variant. The email then asks if the recipient wants to decline a COVID-19 Omicron test, stating that testing is in their best interests. It then provides instructions on how to request a free Omicron PCR test via the NHS portal, with a link to [nhs-order-pcr/COVID-10-omicron-research/](https://nhs.uk/order-pcr/covid-10-omicron-research/). Finally, it asks what happens if the recipient is positive, stating they must isolate for 10 days and be reported to Public Health England.

Wasting no time at all, criminals are already sending fake emails about the new Omicron variant of Covid, to steal personal data and bank details.

Another new fake email attempting to cash in on the confusion and anxiety surrounding the pandemic is doing the rounds, impersonating the NHS and offering 'a free Omicron PCR today to avoid restrictions'.

Which? has reported this website to the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) but other scam texts, emails and calls related to Omicron are likely to follow suit.

Criminals have used similar tactics throughout the global pandemic, for example, when the vaccine first became available and when the Covid Pass was launched.

Report suspicious emails by forwarding the email to [report@phishing.gov.uk](mailto:report@phishing.gov.uk)

To learn more about scams, visit [www.friendsagainstsams.org.uk](http://www.friendsagainstsams.org.uk)